

New Normal Webinar Series Q&A



With Maureen Pisanick and Jen McNeil

We had great questions coming in to the webinar with Maureen and Jen that we didn't have time for during the webinar, so we compiled their answers here.

Q: Any thoughts on residential outdoor schools? I know it will largely depend on whether or not camps are allowed overnight campers, but foodservice in camps present challenges unique to that environment.

A: If camps open, I would largely follow the same CDC guidance for school reopenings with meals served in small groups in a classroom or other small grouping area and avoid congregate feeding. If possible, sack lunches that are grab-and-go style and that campers can take outside to enjoy in nature could be an option, especially if you are just serving breakfast or lunch (not several meals per day). Jen McNeil

Q: What Google Doc are you referring to?

A: Our schools relied heavily on Google Forms to survey and communicate efficiently. Maureen Pisanick

Q: What were the 3 refs that were extended for the summer?

A: Visit lunchassist.org/covid-19 for the packet and other waiver details. Jen McNeil

Q: Is this the time to go out for bid for these packaging supplies to keep things in procurement guidelines, even though things are so fluid?

A: Plan early and often. I certainly think reaching out to manufacturers to verify stocking and varieties, then loading a bid with options to cover out-of-stock or supply chain issues. Have Plans A, B, C, D, etc. Most of our schools buy via a coop group, but we are already having conversation with PACTIV, a manufacturer in our region, about options. Maureen Pisanick

A: I am recommending folks also look into emergency procurement. It depends on your state agency, but you may be able to avoid a bid all together, and simply purchase from the sources available through emergency solicitation during the COVID-19 outbreak. Further, look into simple acquisition purchasing--also check with your state--you may find either of these options much simpler than going to bid during the pandemic. Jen McNeil

Q: What is MPLH?

A: Meals per labor hour. Our goals have always been 18-24; in emergency feeding we have been as high as 61 with an average of 35-40 at most sites. Meals per labor hour is a metric that helps people understand how many meals are prepared and served during a specific duration of time (one hour). This accounts for the labor over time and is a metric of efficiency in food service.
Maureen Pisanick

A: In contrast to Maureen's experience, a lot of people I am working with are less productive (lower meals per hour) during Covid due to having to spend more time packaging and being mindful of safety precautions, and due to the slower method of service (walk up or drive through vs. cafeteria meals that are very quick). You can learn more about meals per labor hour by taking the 12-hour financial management training on the ICN website. If you haven't taken that training I highly recommend it! Jen McNeil

Q: Are those documents from Ohio available to look at online?

A: You can visit www.pisanickpartners.com or email Maureen at maureen@pisanickpartners.com for details.

Q: Spill kits at what cost and how many per school?

A: Check with your custodial/maintenance team for products/existing contracts. Most suppliers will provide additional spray bottles/portioned units that would make it possible to have a smaller volume that can travel. We suggested disposable towels/wipes, sanitizer, gloves, a larger list of PPE, extra garbage bags, and a broom/dustpan. This is a partnership at the district level and not a direct expense line that the food service department should have to take on. Also, teachers asked for Clorox wipes, paper towels, and extra garbage liners for classroom clean ups; each classroom was equipped as a backup plan.
Maureen Pisanick

Q: Any thoughts about how this will affect the nutrition dept. staffing, food cost, revenue?

A: National reports indicate this will have a negative impact:

<https://schoolnutrition.org/news-publications/press-releases/2020/sna-survey-reveals-covid-19-school-meal-trends-financial-impacts/>

Maureen Pisanick

A: I agree with Maureen: the meal services during Covid-19 will likely cost more and have a negative overall impact on the school nutrition program budgets, which is why we really need the HEROES Act to pass so we can at least start to cover some of the losses incurred between March and June 2020. Regarding staffing, it may be true that we actually need more staff than before because meals are more labor intensive to package, and meal service outside the cafeteria is more labor intensive and less efficient than traditional speed lines or cafeteria meal service lines. Food cost appears to be increasing no matter what, but we may be able to mitigate this by purchasing locally. The truth is we do not know what is going to happen, but we need to keep track of the data in our districts, and advocate to prevent budget cuts from Nutrition Services departments. No matter what, Child Nutrition Services departments will continue to be essential services and we will need to fund and staff them adequately to prevent hunger and provide good nutrition to the children and families in the communities we serve. Jen McNeil

Q: What is a Flex Cart?

A: Camshelving Flex Station: www.cambro.com/FlexPromo Maureen Pisanick

Q: The meal pattern waiver is the one that ends on June 30. Is this correct? Or has it been extended for SY 20-21?

A: The meal pattern waiver has only been extended until June 30. Please see the LunchAssist waiver packet for more information, or visit the USDA website. From conversations I have had with state agency staff and USDA, the meal pattern waiver will likely be extended so long as there are staffing and supply chain shortages; however, USDA is not very keen to extend the waiver out more than ~1 month at a time. So while I expect it to continue through the fall, it is currently only through June 30. Jen McNeil

Q: If Manufacturers can offer IW / RTE items for both hot and cold foods and prices that are close to and/or the same as bulk, how would they get these items recognized by the school procurement staff? There have been several manufacturers who state they can't get these items into the pipeline or get schools to view what they have to offer. I have talked with several of them and this is their main question and issue with helping to supply products.

A: Virtual Trade Shows are a must to show new products on market. Also encourage collaboration between distributors who have regional influence on what products will be available to order. Maureen Pisanick

Q: Are your schools going to be serving more individual packaged items for in-classroom feeding? What do you think will be the trend for when school resumes regarding the individually wrapped item RTE items for feeding?

A: In review of a descending dollar report within our region the answer is a resounding Yes. Uncrustables by Smuckers is the prime example. Maureen Pisanick

A: I agree. However, a lot of folks are also looking to cook from scratch and package their own food which can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, it does appear that bulk meal service in the cafeteria served hot and fresh onto the plate/tray will be suspended for the time being, along with salad bars. Jen McNeil

Q: What if your free/reduced rate is only around 12%? How can you do meals in the classroom successfully?

A: Use Google Forms and exciting menus to encourage paid participation, e.g. pre-order for parents to have a convenience that they find value in. Maureen Pisanick

Q: Can you please share companies that make insulated cooler bags?

A: I think Hubert has some, as well as Cambro, but check with your local restaurant supply. Jen Mcneil

Q: Has anyone seen a written guide that addresses what steps to take if an employee reports that they have become infected and they have been working?

A: See the School Food Service Safety Precautions Toolkit on the LunchAssist website (<https://www.lunchassist.org/covid-19>) and the 2 pages of links within this document. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/school-nutrition-professionals.html> Jen McNeil

Q: For a program that has been in full lockdown/social distancing, what should I be getting set up now, in hopes of returning to some form of functioning?

A: There is a lot to do! I would explore the School Food Service Safety Guide (<https://www.lunchassist.org/covid-19>) and the waiver packet on the LunchAssist website, and invite you to join our next Community of Practice conference call on June 4th. See the Lunch Assist website for the registration link. Also check with your state agency. California is holding several town halls for food service directors to discuss re-opening strategies. Finally, review the latest guidance for reopening schools on the CDC website. With all of these resources, you will be able to come up with some strategies for success. I would also encourage you to involve your team up and down the chain of command so you get a really good group of people to discuss and brainstorm what will work at each school in your district. Jen McNeil

Q: Maureen mentioned a spill kit that she supplied her classrooms with. Would she be willing to share what she included in those kits? I think that's a wonderful idea!

A: Check with your custodial/maintenance team for products/existing contracts. Most suppliers will provide additional spray bottles/portioned units that would make it possible to have a smaller volume that can travel. We suggested disposable towels/wipes, sanitizer, gloves, now a larger list of PPE, extra garbage bags, and a broom/dustpan. This is a partnership at the district level and not a direct expense line that the food service department should have to take on. Also, teachers asked for Clorox wipes, paper towels, and extra garbage liners for classroom clean ups; each classroom was equipped as a backup plan. Maureen Pisanick

Q: While the I/W has the safety connotation associated with it, the Speed Scratch and Scratch will be helping the students "Return to Normal."

A: Yes, I totally agree, and I think speed scratch is also much healthier in most cases. We can encourage folks to do speed scratch and package themselves if possible. Jen McNeil

Q: Where can people find ideas for speed scratch menu items/bulk food menu items?

A: [Sign up for our members info](#): Recipes and Webinars series for Summer 2020 prep. Maureen Pisanick

Q: Could Jen please repeat the name of the food safety manual and provide a way to assess it?

A: Yep! School Food Service Safety Precautions Toolkit and can be downloaded for free here: <https://www.lunchassist.org/covid-19> Jen McNeil

For the complete webinar recording, transcript, and slides, go here:
<https://www.healthepro.com/project/new-normal-2-webinar/>

Jen McNeil, a former Child Nutrition Director, is the Founder of LunchAssist, an organization that provides inspiration, support, and guidance to school nutrition professionals. Free Covid-19 Resources are available at their website:
<https://www.lunchassist.org/covid-19>

Maureen Pisanick, also a former Child Nutrition Director, is the Founder of Pisanick Partners, a consulting firm that is your advocate in the industry to get the food, supplies, and recipes you need to have ready-to-use, turn-key solutions to navigate programs successfully. Free Covid-19 Resources are available here:
<https://www.nutrismartnetwork.com/covid-19>

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